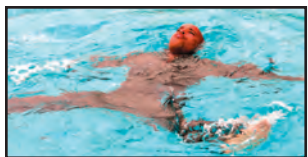


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APRIL 28, 2006



Survival
Training Course
A-3

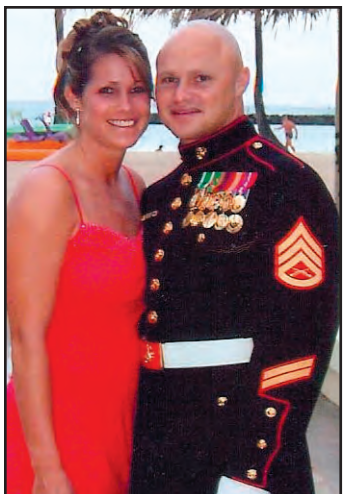


A Trip to the
Zoo
B-1



Baseball
Championships
C-1

3/3 loses 2 Marines in 2 days



Courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Ramseyer, pictured with wife Amanda, was killed in Iraq April 21.

Hawaii-based Marine unit in Iraq mourns loss of warrior, leader

Sgt. Roe F. Seigle
Regimental Combat Team 7

HADITHA, Iraq — Staff Sgt. Jason C. Ramseyer will be remembered for the countless sacrifices he made for his brethren Marines.

His final sacrifice came when he was killed April 21, 2006, by an improvised explo-

sive device while on a convoy in Haditha in Iraq's Al Anbar province.

Ramseyer, 28, was honored by his fellow Marines during a memorial service at the Haditha Dam here April 23.

The Lenoir, N.C., native was remembered as a committed leader and devout family man by those who served with him.

"He was by far the greatest leader of Marines I have ever had the honor of working for," said Sgt. Michael Ferguson, 23, platoon sergeant assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

See RAMSEYER, A-6



Courtesy photo

Corporal Eric R. Lueken, pictured with his grandmother, was killed in Iraq April 22.

Indiana native killed in Iraq

Press Release
MCBH Public Affairs

Corporal Eric R. Lueken, 23, of Dubois, Ind., died April 22 while conducting combat operations against enemy forces in Al Anbar province, Iraq.

Lueken was a field radio operator with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, stationed at Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Lueken joined the Marine Corps Oct. 2003 and reported to Hawaii May 2004. He deployed to Iraq March 2006. He also deployed to Afghanistan with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment from Nov. 2004 to June 2005.

His awards include the Purple Heart, two Combat Action Ribbons, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Sea Service Deployment ribbon.

Lueken is survived by his parents and brother.

Iraqi soldiers join search for missing Sailor

Staff Sgt. Jim Goodwin
1st Marine Division

AL ASAD, Iraq — Iraqi soldiers joined dozens of U.S. troops in the search for a Sailor who has been missing since last week due to a vehicle rollover accident near the Marines' base here April 2.

More than 25 Iraqi soldiers from the Al Asad-based 2nd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division, joined dozens of U.S.

Marines, Sailors and soldiers in daily search operations to recover several missing U.S. service members from the accident.

The accident occurred when a seven-ton truck, part of a Marine combat logistics resupply in Al Anbar Province, rolled over during a flash-flood, according to a Marine Corps press release.

The accident took place along a "wadi" — a gully which usually remains at low levels unless rain waters fill the gully — near the Marines' base here.

So far, two of the three missing U.S. service members' bodies have been recovered. A U.S. Sailor — Petty Officer 3rd Class Marcques J. Nettles of Beaverton, Ore. — is still missing.

Iraqi soldiers spent three days combing miles of shoreline on foot in search of the two missing people. All together, seven U.S. service members are confirmed dead as a result of the accident, which is currently under investigation.

Their efforts seemed welcomed by U.S. troops who had already about a week searching the accident site when the Iraqi military arrived to help.

"There are still people missing ...so the more eyes the better," said Lance Cpl. Anthony Rasmussen, a 20-year-old radio operator from Big Bear Lake, Calif., who spent several days providing mounted security in a Humvee for the various search parties. "I'd want all these peo-



Staff Sgt. Jim Goodwin

An Iraqi soldier discusses the day's activities, through a translator, with Petty Officer 1st Class Krishnaa Reyes, a Navy corpsman for an Iraqi Army military transition team April 11 during search and recovery efforts for several missing U.S. service members who were involved in a vehicle accident earlier this month.

ple looking for me, if it was me missing."

Clad in body armor and Kevlar helmets and armed with AK-47 assault rifles, the Iraqis patrolled several kilometers east of the accident site, where some on-scene personnel suspect the flash flood may have carried the bodies of the missing U.S. service members.

After three days of searching, the Iraqi soldiers were able to find indiscriminant clothing and equipment — gloves, a watch, a pair of safety goggles — all found thousands of meters from the sight of the accident, evidence of the flash flood's torrential strength that night.

"We feel so sad because their families are waiting on them; sad because we haven't found them yet," said Pvt. "Ahmed," following the first day of two hour-long foot patrols in 90-degree temperatures and over rough terrain.

"I was so glad because I thought we were going to find them, but we didn't," said Ahmed, who was on the patrol when a U.S. military-style glove was found along the wadi's shoreline by an Iraqi soldier.

The search effort was the first large-scale, joint operation between Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division and multiple U.S. military units, said Capt. "Raseed," the Iraqis' on-scene commander.

"This is our strongest mis-

See SEARCH, A-7



Photos by Sgt. Roe F. Seigle

Memorial services were held at the Marines' base at Haditha Dam, Iraq, April 10, 2006, for four Marines who died as a result of a vehicle accident earlier this month in Iraq's western Al Anbar Province.

3/3 Marine remembered

Sgt. Roe F. Seigle
Regimental Combat Team 7

HADITHA, Iraq — Corporal Andres Aguilar will be remembered by the Marines he served with as a dedicated young man who gave faith to his seniors that the job would always get done.

Aguilar, who died earlier this month in a vehicle accident, was one of four Marines memorialized during a service at the Marines' base in this Euphrates River valley region in western Al Anbar province, April 18.

The other three Marines honored at the service were: Cpl. David A. Bass, of

Nashville, Tenn.; Lance Cpl. Patrick J. Gallagher, of Jacksonville, Fla.; and Cpl. Brian R. St. Germain, of Warwick, R.I. All three belonged to the Camp Pendleton, Calif.-based 1st Marine Logistics Group.

Aguilar drowned when the seven-ton truck he was in rolled over in a flash flood near Al Asad, Iraq. He was among six other Marines and one Sailor who died in the accident.

Aguilar was a ground communications repairman for 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, which left their base in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, more than a month ago for a seven-month deployment to Iraq.

The Victoria, Texas, native was a 2002 graduate from Regan High School where he played football and soccer. He joined the Marine Corps June 4, 2002, and attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif. He then attended the Ground Communications Repair course at the Marines' base in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Aguilar reported to 3rd Bn., 3rd

See AGUILAR, A-7



Photos of four Marines are displayed during a memorial service along with a rifle, dog tags, Kevlar helmet and combat boots.

News Briefs

Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society Fundraiser

This year's fundraising drive is underway and will end today. Service members who would like to donate to the NMCRS should contact their unit representative who is spearheading the NMCRS fundraiser for their unit.

Parade and Concert

There will be "A Salute to Our Troops" Waikiki parade and outdoor concert to salute all Hawaii-based military personnel, including the men and women of the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserves. The Parade will begin at 9:30 a.m. May 6 from Fort DeRussy and continue on to Kalakaua and Monsarrat avenues and end at Kapiolani Park at 11:30 a.m. The outdoor concert, featuring John Legend, will begin at 12:05 p.m. at Kapiolani Park Bandstand and Main Stage and end at 4:45 p.m. For additional information, call 836-3351.

Plan ahead for May case lot sale

The annual May worldwide case lot sale takes place at nearly all commissaries next month with values and customers should plan ahead to take advantage of the sale. The sale gives shoppers the chance to buy bulk quantities of their favorite products at savings of up to 50 percent; far above the 30 percent or more they normally save by shopping at their commissary. You'll be able to find sale dates and locations at www.commissaries.com later this month to give you plenty of time to plan your shopping trip.

Parking Lot Closure

The Base Theater parking lot will be closed until Aug. 23 for repairs and improvements. For more information, call Base Facilities at 257-2171.

Phone Number Change

The Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society phone numbers have changed. The new numbers are: 257-1972, 257-1973, and 257-1975 (fax). For more information, contact Marie Charron, administrative clerk, base adjutant's office at 257-8812.

Hawaii Marine Accepts Letters

Letters should be clear and concise. The Hawaii Marine staff reserves the right to edit letters for clarity and length. Comments must be signed with a full name and a telephone number must be provided. All letters and news briefs should be e-mailed to: editor@hawaiimarine.com.

Important Phone Numbers:

On-Base Emergencies	911
Military Police	257-7114
Child Protective Service	832-5300
Fraud, Waste, Abuse & EEO	257-8852
Business Management Hotline	257-3188
Pothole & Streetlight Repair	257-2380
Base Information	449-7110
MCBH Duty Chaplain	257-7700

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Cpl. Sara A. Carter
Lance Cpl. Ryan Trevino
Lance Cpl. Edward C. deBree
Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

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E-MAIL: EDITOR@HAWAIIIMARINE.COM
FAX: 257-1289, PHONE: 257-8835



Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

Col. Michael E. Love, commanding officer, Marine Aircraft Group 24, and Lt. Cmdr. Doug Bryan, base supply officer, here, cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Anderson Hall Satellite Dining Facility April 24.

Mess hall celebrates opening

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson
Combat Correspondent

Colonel Michael E. Love, commanding officer, Marine Aircraft Group 24, here, and Lt. Cmdr. Doug Bryan, base supply officer, here, cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Anderson Hall Satellite Dining Facility April 24. According to Chief Warrant Officer Richard Martinez, food service officer, Headquarters Battalion, the new facility has changed a lot to

accommodate the Marines and Sailors. "The outside lanai has been expanded by 120 square feet, and closed off so air conditioning can be used," said Martinez. "We made the chow hall into a sports theme, and was completed in collaboration with our contractor, but the majority of the work was done by our own Marines and Seabees." Martinez said the main reason the mess hall was renovated was to increase capacity for the Marines.

"We wanted to give the Marines and Sailors a place where they can go to chow and sit down and relax in the air conditioning," said Martinez. The additions to the chow hall cost approximately \$141,000 and were well worth it, said Love. "I've been to every Marine Corps base and none of the wings have as nice of a cafeteria as this," said Love. "This will make going to lunch a lot easier than driving all the way to the main dining facility. It will allow them to eat and be back at work in a lot shorter amount of time."

Paperless CLEP offered

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson
Combat Correspondent

Over the past several months Hawaii Pacific University, working in conjunction with the Joint Education Center here, has upgraded its software to computerize the College Level Examination Program testing. A paper based CLEP test, an exam that can be taken in place of a college course, has been offered in previous years, but as of April 21, all Department of Defense identification cardholders will be able to take tests without having to wait for a grade. The lab will offer CLEP testing every Friday from 9 until 11 a.m., 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. and 2 until 4 p.m. In order to take the exam HPU must be contacted to set up an available time for testing. "If the time comes when testing is needed on a more often basis, we'll start opening the lab on other days or for longer hours," said Loretta Cornett-Huff, command education services, Joint Education Center. "It's a good way to get college



Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

Dave Terry, CLEP program manager, Hawaii Pacific University, explains how the new testing facility will work April 19, at Building 219.

courses out of the way without actually having to attend the class. I don't think military members know how easy it is for them to get an education. They can take the tests and get instant results. A CLEP test can't be failed so there's no reason why it shouldn't be done." With the old paper based version of the exam it took six to eight weeks to get the results. The new computer based test is offered at no-cost to active duty military personnel, but everyone

else will have to pay a fee of \$75. "Active duty military that are enrolled in the schools on base have priority of the lab, but anyone can use the lab for things like research," said Cornett-Huff. "A list of tests can be found at the lab." Dave Terry, CLEP program coordinator, HPU, said there was 16 different tests that could be taken on a paper based exam, but the computer exams have over 30 tests to take and that Mega Video, here, has over \$10,000 worth of videos

that are made to prepare a student for a CLEP test at no charge. "Military personnel don't realize how much information they've known or obtained throughout their military career," said Cornett-Huff. "The students are what keep the lab going, so I hope they put it to good use. The only thing I can compare the tests to is a slice of bread, you can't go wrong." For more information about CLEP testing contact Hawaii Pacific University at 254-2687.

Weekend weather outlook

Today



Day — Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

Night — Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

High — 80
Low — 69

Saturday



Day — PPartly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

Night — Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

High — 80
Low — 69

Sunday



Day — Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

Night — Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 20 percent.

High — 80
Low — 69



Qualifying for Survival Training Course

Lance Cpl. Ron F. Ford, ordnance technician, HMH-362, works on one of the strokes he will need to do to qual while in Miramar, Calif, April 19, at the Officer's Club Pool.



Marines from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 362 do a prequal at the Officer's Club Pool, April 19. The Marines are preparing for the real qualifications at Miramar, Calif.

Story and Photos by Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson
Combat Correspondent

Every year each Marine must qualify in a pool to prove they have basic water survival skills, but some Marines must push the limits and must qualify on a more difficult course.

“The Marines out here are actually doing a pre-qual for the Aviation Survival Training Program at Miramar, Calif.,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Damon K. Browne, air medical safety corpsman, Marine Aircraft Group 24. “It’s a three day class where they sit through a lot of classes and then do things like the Helo Dunker and Sweat Box, but we’re just working on the basics during our training.”

Browne said their training consists of a work-up where the Marines swim with flight gear on in order to help them become Aerial Observers.

“It’s the first time the Marines will get to swim with all of the gear on so it’s good for them,” said 31-year-old Browne. “While at Miramar the Marines will have to swim with all of the gear and man-

ually inflate their flotation collar after floating for a long period of time. If they pass all of the courses in the ASTC, then they can become Aerial Observers.”

According to Browne the hardest part of the training for the Marines is swimming with the gear on.

“When a Marine does fail the course it’s usually due to how hard it is to swim with all of the gear on,” said Browne, a Lakefield, Minn. native. “They have to swim with boots, a flight suit, flight helmet, gloves and air-safe vest. All that gear gets pretty heavy and make it pretty difficult for the Marines.”

Corporal Isaiah P. Bryan, flight line mechanic, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 362, agrees.

“It makes it so much tougher, with gear,” said Bryan. “I can only imagine how much easier it would be without the gear on.”

Browne said he thinks the training is very effective and beneficial for the Marines.

“If the Marines didn’t do this training they wouldn’t know what to expect once they got to Miramar,” said Browne. “Especially since this is their first time being in

the water with full flight gear on.”

Browne said this training is done whenever the units need it.

“Whenever a unit needs someone for an Aerial Observer billet we will start working with the Marine to prepare him for what he will encounter at Miramar,” said Browne.

The Aviation Survival Training Program Marines will go through includes four types of aviation physiology and water survival training that consist of the initial training; specialized, supplemental and advanced continuation training; refresher continuation training; and adjunctive training that augments the basic refresher cycle.

There are many requirements, including physical prerequisites, a Marine must have before being accepted to the survival course.

If a Marine were to arrive in Miramar and fail the ASTP, they would come back here and wouldn’t be allowed to have another opportunity to become an Aerial Observer, said Browne.

“It’s not an impossible course to conquer, people just need to get past the swimming with gear and they’ll do just fine,” said Browne.



Corporal. Bryan P. Isaiah, flight line mechanic, HMH-362, checks the time on his watch to see how much time he has left in the water.



Combat boots and other gear sit next to the pool.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Damon K. Browne, air medical safety corpsman, Marine Aircraft Group 24, assists Cpl. Isaiah P. Bryan, flight line mechanic, HMH-362, with his prequal before heading to California.

Iraqis elect replacement chairman

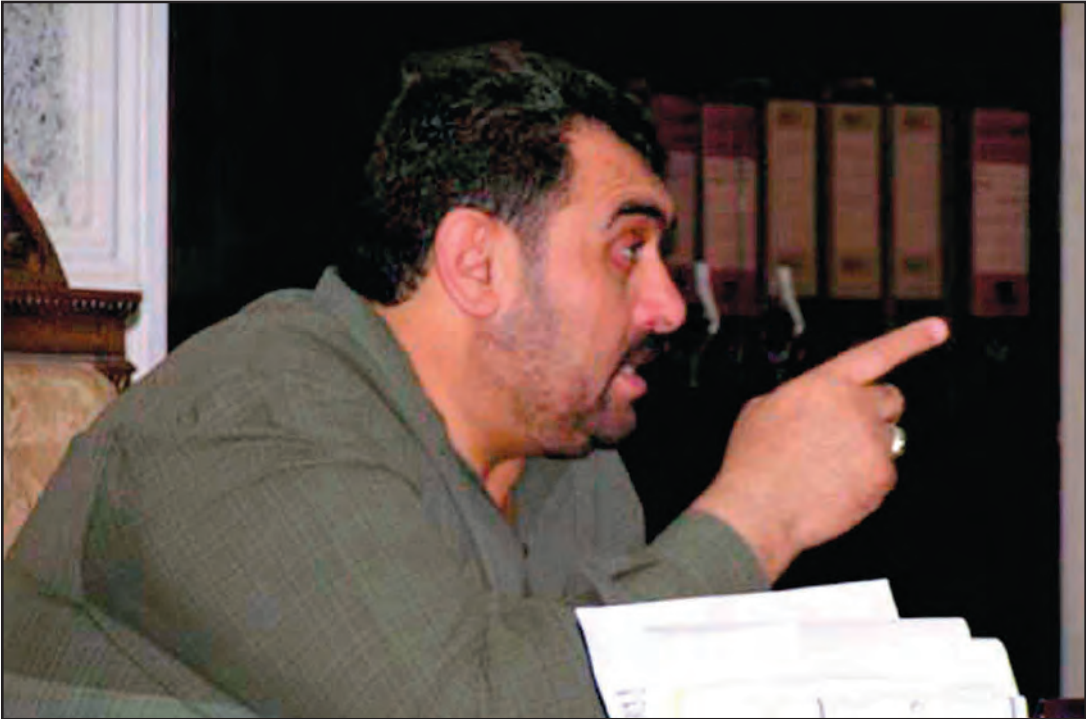
Capt. Chris Perrine
Public Affairs Officer

RAMADI, Iraq — In a city most recently known for violence and instability, the Al Anbar Provincial Council took significant democratic strides Wednesday. They met, and they voted. The two acts sound simple to an American, but they are heroic accomplishments in Ramadi.

Twenty provincial council members elected a new chairman, selecting a replacement for the chairman who was killed nearly a month ago when exiting a mosque. Although the council normally meets at least once per month, this was the first meeting since January 5 due to recent instability.

The meeting began when the council selected the oldest member present to serve as the honorary president of the gathering. It is important in this culture to honor the elders, and the Iraqis meld their traditional values with more western democratic practices.

As business resumed, the council took nominations to fill the vacant chairman's



Capt. Chris Perrine

Gov. Ma'moun Sami Rachid discusses security in Ramadi April 12 with two Iraqi brigade commanders and his provincial police chief.

position, emphasizing that the four female council members were eligible for the position. Only one candidate was nominated, but each member had the chance to vote, marking a small victory for democracy. The sitting vice chairman, Dr. Abd Salem, was elected as the new chairman, leaving a vacancy at the vice

chair position.

A second round of nominations resulted in two candidates for the position of vice chair. In a moment of levity, the provincial governor tried to nominate his council woman wife, who laughingly declined. A vote followed, and Councilman Kamis Ahmed Alabtán won with a

vote of 15 to 5. The votes were validated by Governor Ma'moun Sami Rachid; Marine Brig. Gen. David G. Reist, Deputy Commanding General of Support for Multi-National Force-West; and Col. Frank J. Corte, 3rd Civil Affairs Group Detachment Commander and advisor. Dr. Abd Salem gave a short



Capt. Chris Perrine

An Al Anbar Provincial Council Woman casts her vote for the new council vice chairman April 12 in the first council meeting since January 5. The council also elected a new chairman to replace the former chairman who was killed when leaving a mosque last month.

acceptance speech, declaring "I will work for the sons of the province and do what I can."

He also exhorted his fellow council members to represent their constituents well by quoting passages from the Koran. He told them, "If you don't give good advice to the people, you won't go to heaven."

In an encouraging sign of solidarity, Salem also said that there are no differences in sect or ethnicity in Al Anbar. All residents are Iraqis.

Many pundits question whether democracy can take hold in Iraq, but with the voting concluded the council proved itself as capable of democratic action as any western assembly and moved on to other business for the day. The council members discussed various issues, from security to weapons permits to death certificates to reconstruction projects.

Much of the discussion focused on security, one of the most pressing issues in Ramadi and the rest of Al Anbar. The provincial chief of police, Brig. Gen. Shaman, addressed the council and discussed recent success with recruiting Iraqi police, as well as plans to recruit hundreds more in the near future. He promised that the security situation would improve with the much-needed additional

manpower. There are now approximately 1,300 policemen in Ramadi.

Prior to the council meeting, Shaman participated in an intense meeting with two Iraqi army brigade commanders, Brig. Gen. Reist and Gov. Ma'moun to discuss the security issue. The leaders discussed many of the challenges they face and debated some solutions. They also discussed the conduct of the Iraqi army, due to complaints the governor has received from civilians. After describing one complaint, the governor related a story about an Iraqi officer who set a good example by reprimanding an Iraqi soldier who mistreated a Ramadi citizen.

"I respect that officer," said Ma'moun. "We are all one army, and we are all Iraqi."

The Iraqi army does not yet operate independently from U.S. forces in Ramadi, but it is assuming an increasing role. The fact that it operates in the city at all is a considerable sign of improvement. Less than two years ago the Iraqi army essentially did not exist. There are now approximately more than 17,000 Iraqi soldiers in Al Anbar, including elements of two divisions, and the recruiting effort continues. Three Iraqi brigades conduct independent operations in territory that they control.

Gas construction nears completion

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson
Combat Correspondent

Since the beginning of November 2005, Gas & More, has been undergoing construction to make using the pumps better for users.

"West Coast Construction is who is doing the work, and what they're doing is replacing the canopy over the gas pumps," said Mike Bailey, store manager, Gas & More, here. "The new canopy will be used to keep customers dry when it rains and to provide them with shade."

According to Bailey, the canopy will also help to keep the pumps in good working conditions.

"All of the construction will cost approximately \$585,000, and is scheduled to be finished sometime in July," said Bailey. "I think the worst part about the construction being done is the wait that it's causing the consumer. I'd say in peak hours from like 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. the wait is usually around 10 minutes, but other than that the wait is usually very short."

Bailey said that since construction has been going on business at the gas station has fallen.

"We definitely have lost some business, but I think it's due to other things as well," said Bailey. "I don't really think that the construction is stopping people from buying gas here, and I certainly don't think they're going elsewhere to pay higher prices. I think people just aren't driving as much due to the increase in gas prices, which is causing the change in our business."



Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

Workers from West Coast Construction work on The Gas & More station April 26. It has under construction since November and is scheduled to be completed in July.

New homes on the block



Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson

There are currently two housing construction projects in progress aboard MCB Hawaii. The construction to replace 212 junior enlisted units began in August 2003 and the construction to replace 46 junior enlisted and field grade units began in December 2004. A total of 226 junior enlisted and 32 field grade officer units will be built. The houses are being built to replace homes originally built during 1957 and 1963. The junior enlisted families will begin moving in during May-June 2006 timeframe and field grade officers will begin moving in during the September-October 2006 timeframe. Both families currently in old base housing and families who are on the waiting list will be eligible to move into the new housing.

DoD medical records ready to go global

Cpl. Sarah M. Maynard
MCB Camp Butler

CAMP LESTER, OKINAWA, Japan — A Marine is shot in combat in Iraq and medically evacuated to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany for treatment. Somewhere along the trip, the Marine loses his medical record and the doctor who treats him has no idea about the Marine's prior health and will have a difficult time finding out how to treat the Marine.

To prevent this scenario from occurring, the U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, along with the entire Department of Defense, is in the first phase of a transfer from the Composite Health Care System to Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application, a new, global medical record database, according to Cmdr. Margaret Beaubien, the project officer for USNH Okinawa.

The AHLTA system makes patients' health information immediately available to civilian and military medical professionals around the world via a computer global database,

Beaubien explained.

Under the current health care program, the method of storing health information is varied from one military treatment facility to the next, making transference of data difficult, Beaubien explained. The new system eliminates a lot of problems related to the paper medical records.

"Doctors depend on health records for a patient's medical history," Beaubien said. "Those records can easily be misplaced, or left at a different medical treatment facility. Once fully employed, AHLTA will provide a secure, comprehensive and legible computerized health record, available to any provider at any time, anywhere in the world."

The new system is a major step forward for the military medical profession, according to Beaubien.

"The first transition (to the new system) will be complete on Okinawa in May," she said. "At that point AHLTA will contain the last 25 months of data for each patient and will have

See RECORDS, A- 7



Photos by Sgt. Roe F. Seigle

Members from the Hawaii-based 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment held a memorial service for Lenoir, N.C., native Staff Sgt. Jason C. Ramseyer April 23 at their base at Haditha, Iraq. Ramseyer was killed in a roadside blast April 20.

RAMSEYER, from A-1

The Hawaii-based “America’s Battalion” arrived in Iraq about six weeks ago to replace another Marine battalion conducting security operations in this region along the Euphrates River.

Ramseyer was the platoon commander for the battalion’s Forward Command Post, also known as the “Jump CP.” His job often required him to travel on Al Anbar’s dangerous roads to provide security for Iraqis and other Marines.

“The world was a better place when Staff Sgt. Ramseyer was here,” said Ferguson.

Ramseyer joined the Marine Corps in June 1996. He reported to the Hawaii-based 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment in November 2003, and deployed with the unit to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom last year.

For duty in Iraq, Ramseyer was hand-selected by Lt. Col. Norman L. Cooling, the battalion’s commanding officer, as the platoon commander for the Jump CP – a duty his Marines say he performed with consummate professionalism and unparalleled valor.

“He had courage,” said Ferguson, who was also exposed to the blast that killed Ramseyer. “He would always go to the front line and he never showed fear in doing so. He had the mentality of a true warrior.”

“He would never put a Marine in a dangerous situation he was not willing to put himself in first,” said Gunnery Sgt. Michael Kiernan, 33, company gunnery sergeant for the battalion’s Headquarters and Service Company.

“His Marines respected him because he treated them, regardless of rank, with the respect and dignity they deserved. He was a great friend and a great Marine. We will all miss him.”

Kiernan also said that aside for his love for the Marine Corps and his Marines, Ramseyer was also a dedicated family man. Kiernan remembers one Christmas Eve staying up all night assisting Ramseyer assemble a trampoline for his children.

“He strived to have the perfect family,” said Kiernan. “He cherished every minute he had with his wife and children. He even named his weapons and protective equipment after them. There was nothing he would not do for them.”

Ramseyer’s past duty assignments include: 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.; mortar instructor at The Basic School at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Va.; martial arts instructor at the Martial Arts Center of Excellence at Quantico, Va.

Ramseyer’s personal awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (3rd Award) and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Ramseyer is survived by his wife, Amanda and his three children, Caleb, Riley and Cadence.



A Marine with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, pays final respects to Staff Sgt. Jason C. Ramseyer.

AGUILAR, from A-1

Marine Regiment March 25, 2003.

Prior to his deployment to Iraq, Aguilar made two prior deployments – once as part of the Battalion Landing Team for the Okinawa, Japan-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and once last year in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

“He always gave me faith the job would always get done,” said Aguilar’s Platoon Commander, 1st Lt. Brenden Mooney. “He was a strong and dedicated young man. I watched him take seven other junior Marines under his wing and train them.”

Mooney, and approximately 150 other Marines and Sailors attended Aguilar’s memorial service April 10 in the Haditha Dam, located in Haditha, Iraq. Several Marines who knew Aguilar spoke of his dedication to the Marine Corps, his family and the Marines he served with.

“He could fix anything,” said Staff Sgt. Gatai Patu. “He will be surely missed by all of us.”

Aguilar’s awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon.

He is survived by his mother, Olivia Aguilar and his father, Andres Aguilar, Sr.

The other three confirmed U.S. service members who died in the accident, all from 1st MLG, were – Lance Cpl. Felipe D. Sandoval-Flores, of Los Angeles; Staff Sgt. Abraham G. Twitchell, of Yelm, Wash.; and Lance Cpl. Eric A. Palmisano, of Florence, Wis. A U.S. Sailor, Petty Officer 3rd Class Marcques J. Nettles, of Beaverton, Ore., is still listed as “Duty Status – Whereabouts Unknown” from the accident.

RECORDS, from A-5

the ability to document all new outpatient encounters."

Because the new medical record is a computer database, the program will eventually become a smart program, Beaubien explained.

"AHLTA will be able to scan records and medical histories to spot trends," Beaubien said. "This will help identify anything from a possible medical condition in a single person to an epidemic in a local area."

When the program reaches full functionality in 2011, AHLTA will also contain laboratory information, in-patient records, X-rays and pharmaceutical information. Although that time is still a long way off, the ultimate goal of the medical database is to completely eliminate the paper health record, Beaubien explained.

"There will not be enough data to give up the paper health record for some time yet," Beaubien said. "Until AHLTA can function completely as a global system, the old paper records will not go away. The paper record is still the official method of maintaining a health record.

"Until the records are phased out, doctors will print an outpatient encounter sheet, to be placed in the record," she continued. "After the phase-out, patients will still be able to request printed records from their doctors."

SEARCH, from A-1

sion, more than any other,” said Raseed.

The operation was especially important to the Iraqi soldiers since many of them have families of their own, he said.

Furthermore, 2nd Brigade has lost five of soldiers in the past six months, so the Iraqi soldiers sympathize with the families of those lost, said Raseed.

“This is a very humanitarian mission,” said Raseed. “Even before this mission, we work as one team, one family.”

The Iraqis’ efforts came nearly a week into the search, which has continued for more than 10 days now.

While the Iraqi soldiers searched along one side of the Wadi, Marines and U.S. soldiers from Al Asad used everything from heavy equipment tractors to shovels and even digging by hand to carefully search through tons of water and sediment in hopes of finding the missing Marine.

They even used metal detectors in hopes of finding Nettles and lost equipment.

One Marine engineer on scene said he received nearly 200 hits on his metal detector, the majority of which proved to be nothing more than false readings – rebar, concertina wire, soda cans and other metal objects buried in the wadi’s sediment.

“It’s frustrating,” said Cpl. Scott Shoptaw, a 20-year-old combat engineer from Cabot, Ark., who has spent days now searching the wadi’s waist-high waters. “You want to find them

more than anything.”

With each passing day of the search, the waters became shallower, making search efforts easier, according to several Marine combat engineers on site.

While the Iraqi soldiers found several items along the wadi’s shores, U.S. troops discovered several items as well, to include U.S. military body armor, night vision goggles and several rifles.

“It’s good to find pieces to guide you towards, hopefully, something larger in this illogical nightmare,” said Shoptaw, taking a break from wading through the wadi’s brown waters.

By the end of the second day of their search efforts, the Iraqi soldiers had similar results – they’d found just a handful of items presumed to belong to the accident victims.

“We have frustration, but we think we will get them,” said Sgt. “Salah,” a 40-year-old Iraqi soldier who added that the search efforts were even more important than combating insurgents in Rutbah, which he participated in last year.

Despite seemingly endless foot patrols through rugged terrain, swarms of mosquitoes nipping at their exposed skin, and sweltering heat, the Iraqi soldiers’ priority was finding the missing Marine and Sailor, said Salah.

“We don’t care if we have to stay longer; I’m used to the weather,” said Salah, who wanted to stay beyond the scheduled three days to continue the search. “Everybody wants to find them to help their families.”

“Maybe they have kids,” interrupts another soldier, one of

several who gathered around Salah as he spoke. “We know because we have families and we know how they would feel if this happened to us.”

Raseed said that his soldiers worked tirelessly to search the area for the missing service members. Some even volunteered to strip off their boots and search the waters, instead of along the wadi’s shores, he said.

“They are searching the river by themselves,” said Raseed, who added that he is proud of his soldiers’ initiative to search the waters. “Already some of the soldiers have volunteered to go into the water to look for the Marines. They are all heroes to me.”

A handful of Marines from Regimental Combat Team 7 assisted the Iraqis with their three-day search. The Marines are part of 2nd Brigade’s partnered Military Transition Team - groups of Coalition service members assigned to track and guide each Iraqi military unit’s progression towards independent operations.

Transition team members for 2nd Brigade have evaluated and mentored the unit’s 300 or so soldiers for more than three months now.

“Three months ago, they would not have been able to conduct sustained operations like this,” said Maj. Jonathan P. Dunne, operations officer for 2nd Brigade’s transition team. “When we got here (to Iraq), their focus was very limited.”

In the past three months, the Marines say the Iraqi soldiers have made steady progress, learning everything from basic

marksmanship to administrative processes and the tactical decision-making skills they’ll need to operate on their own, which Coalition officials say will happen by year’s end.

The brigade’s ability to coordinate and conduct the search efforts was another step in that progression, as it was the first true test of the Iraqis’ ability to plan, coordinate and conduct a sustained operation away from their camp at Al Asad.

Now, the Iraqi soldiers are beginning to understand how to conduct the basic fundamentals required for a military unit to sustain itself, said Dunne, a Flossmoor, Ill., native.

During the recovery operation, the Iraqi soldiers provided their own security, coordinate logistical support, and establish a base of operations from which to coordinate the search efforts.

The Iraqi soldiers coordinated their efforts with adjacent Marine and U.S. Army units searching the area, which required advanced, detailed planning – a stark improvement from three months ago, said Dunne.

“They understand the importance of finding (them),” added Staff Sgt. Jasper K. Key, the transition team’s communications chief. Key was one of the Marines assisting the Iraqis with search efforts.

Though the soldiers still have more progress to make before they can relieve Coalition Forces here by year’s end, the Marines say that the Iraqi soldiers “are getting better” and beginning to understand the in’s and out’s of

soldiering.

“Many initially said they joined for the money, but after talking to them, they say they’re in it for a better Iraq,” said Key, who spent three days assisting the Iraqi soldiers with search operations. “They want a better Iraq.”

Key knows all too well the importance of finding missing servicemembers’ remains. In 2000, the 33-year-old was part of a joint task force which recovered the remains of two U.S. pilots in Vietnam. At one of the pilot’s funerals, the family was quite appreciative of their efforts, said Key, an Oxford, Miss., native.

“It’s a big relief for families once their sons or daughters are returned,” said Key, who led several of the foot patrols with Iraqi soldiers to search for Nettles. “It does mean a lot.”

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Krishnna J. Reyes, the transition team’s medical corpsman, also accompanied the Iraqi soldiers during their search efforts. The 16-year Navy veteran, who said he’s met the missing sailor – a fellow Navy corpsman – agrees with Key’s sentiments.

“If I was one of those family members of one of the missing, I’d look at it like this: everyone out there (searching) is making an impact,” said Reyes, resting in the back of a humvee following a two-hour foot patrol along the wadi. “I wouldn’t care if he was American or Iraqi, purple or green.”

Editor’s Note: The names of the Iraqi soldiers featured in this article have been changed to protect their identities.